

Story 1559 (1992 Tape 2)

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The Sermon the Hoca¹ Was Never to Preach

One Friday² when Nasreddin Hoca was supposed to preach a sermon, he asked the congregation in the mosque, "O Muslims, do you know what I am going to preach about today?"

The congregation responded, "No, Hoca, we do not know."

The Hoca said, "Well, if you do not know, how should I know?" Having said that, he stepped down from the mimber³ and departed from the mosque

On the following Friday, he again asked the congregation the same question: "O Muslims, do you know what I am going to preach about today?"

Remembering what had happened on the previous Friday, people all said, "Yes, Hoca, we know."

¹A hoca is a preacher and the religious leader of a community. In pre-Republican times the hoca was also the community teacher. Separation of church and state in the Republic required that teachers be people of secular rather than of religious training. Nasreddin Hoca is Turkey's most popular comic folk character.

²Although Sunday is the day of the week in which most Turks do not work, the Moslem faithful still consider Friday the sabbath. While sermons may be preached at other services on other days of the week, it is at the Friday noon service that it is obligatory to have a sermon. Friday noon is the high point of the religious week, and the noon service on that day usually has the largest attendance. The Friday sermon is known as the hutbe.

³The mimber (sometimes minber) is the podium or pulpit

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Hoca responded, "Well, if you already know what I am going to say, then there is no need for me to say it." Again he descended the mimber and left.

Another week passed and it was Friday again. For the third time Nasreddin Hoca asked the same question: "O Muslims, do you know what I am going to preach about today?"

Having talked over their problem before the prayer service, the congregation had planned the response that they would make this time. Half of the congregation said, "Yes, Hoca, we know."

But the other half said, "No, Hoca, we do not know."

"In that case," said the Hoca, "let those who do know what I am going to talk about tell those who do not know." Descending from the mimber, he left the mosque and returned home.

from which the sermon is preached in a mosque.